

LATS Stakeholder Interview Summary

Background

The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has begun a three-year comprehensive airport system study to guide and coordinate future investments in Washington's public use airports. The purpose of the statewide Long-term Air Transportation Study (LATS) is to examine our state's airport system and develop a plan for longer term strategic investments in the system. This is the first time such an assessment has ever been made of Washington's long term aviation needs

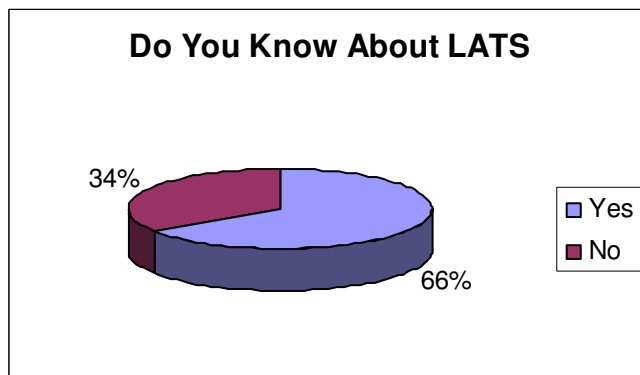
LATS will be conducted in three phases; the first two phases will focus on fact finding, analysis and data collection of technical aviation industry information and market trends. Throughout each phase, an aggressive public information, and outreach effort will support the LATS project, as it is critical all stakeholders have the opportunity to get involved and are provided with updates on this important initiative. Phase I will include an airport inventory survey and capacity assessment that provides a "snapshot" of Washington's 141 public use airport facilities. Phase I began in early May and is scheduled to be completed by September 30, 2006.

Included in Phase I fact finding are informational interviews with key stakeholders in the state's airport system. These stakeholders include airport managers, state legislators, and aviation system users including commercial airlines, both cargo and passenger, general aviation (GA) stakeholders and other key constituents involved in economic development, aviation advocacy and cities located in areas with general aviation and/or commercial airports. The findings of these interviews are summarized below.

Summary Results of Interviews

Q1 – AWARENESS OF LATS PROJECT

Thirty-two individuals (list attached) were interviewed over a two month period from June 13 through August 11, 2006. Sixty-six percent of the people interviewed knew about the LATS.



Q2 Challenges for the Community

There are a number of challenges facing Washington's aviation system today. What are some of the major aviation challenges that you perceive in your community?

Some of the major challenges for local communities include:

Land use-growth and the demand for land for development are putting major pressures on airports. Noise, environmental, geographical and airport compatibility issues are becoming increasingly problematic due to growth. More needs to be done to preserve existing airports and land use laws and zoning should be strengthened to protect Washington airports.

Funding – Federal and state grants are the lifeline for small, public-use airports. Federal money is dwindling and state money is minimal. Small airports are also forced to meet ever increasing and changing federal mandates on safety and security without funding to support it. State and federal money also is restricted to a short list of eligible airport development projects. Funds can not, for instance, be used for general maintenance (janitorial, light fixtures). There is also trouble with the local match that airports are required to have in order to get these infrastructure dollars. The local match needs to be low. It would also be helpful if "in-kind" contributions, such as volunteer labor, could be considered eligible and counted toward the local match given the limited resources of local communities.

Capacity – There is a perception that we are relying too heavily on a single airport, SeaTac. SeaTac is expected to be maxed to capacity in the next 15 years but because of growth and encroachment on airport land, it is increasingly difficult to site or expand a major commercial airport. There is also concern that the demands on small airports are going to dramatically increase as the use of VLJ's (very light jets) which will begin service in 2007, and other small aircraft become more popular allowing people to locate anywhere there is a landing strip of at least 3000 ft.

Challenges for the State

Challenges for the State include:

- Lack of funds
- Lack of a program - expand language on what this means?
- Limited awareness/knowledge of aviation industry issues by Legislators and other state officials who are key decision makers
- Rising costs of fuel, pavement and land
- Land use laws
- Lack of awareness of data measuring economic impact of local airports and freight data
- Very little cooperation between airports
- System redundancy
- Local match is a problem for some of the very small airports

Q3 Maximizing the Value and Impact of Public Investment

One of the goals proposed for the State Aviation system is to "Maximize the value and impact of public investment in the aviation system statewide." What do you think about this goal?

Most of those interviewed said that "maximizing the value and impact of public investment is a good goal that should be done in order to allocate scarce dollars around the state-wide airport system efficiently." Some felt it was necessary because of scarce dollars but undesirable. Some people expressed a concern that the LATS process would be an exercise in prioritizing and eliminating some smaller airports. There was also concern that the people who run, work with and really know the airports would not be included in the process.

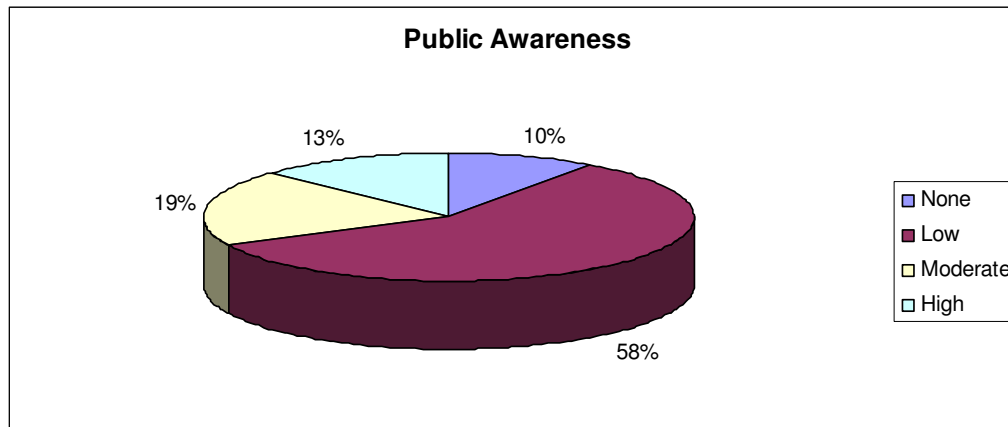
Q4 Restricted to Airport Managers

Is there is enough room at your local airport(s) to accommodate the known projected demand over the next 10 years?

Airport	Room To Expand?	Constraints?
Bellingham Int'l Airport	Yes	No constraints
Skagit County Regional Airport	Yes	Wetlands and land use Controversy and reluctance of community
Paine Field Airport	Yes	Relocation of Creeks
Yakima Air Terminal	Yes	Land use
Deer Park Airport	No	Land
Port of Seattle/Sea-Tac Int'l Airport	No	Many constraints
King County International/Boeing Field	No	Growth and land use
Pearson Field Airport	Yes	Land use
Kenmore Air	Yes	None
Port of Pasco		

Level of Awareness in Community

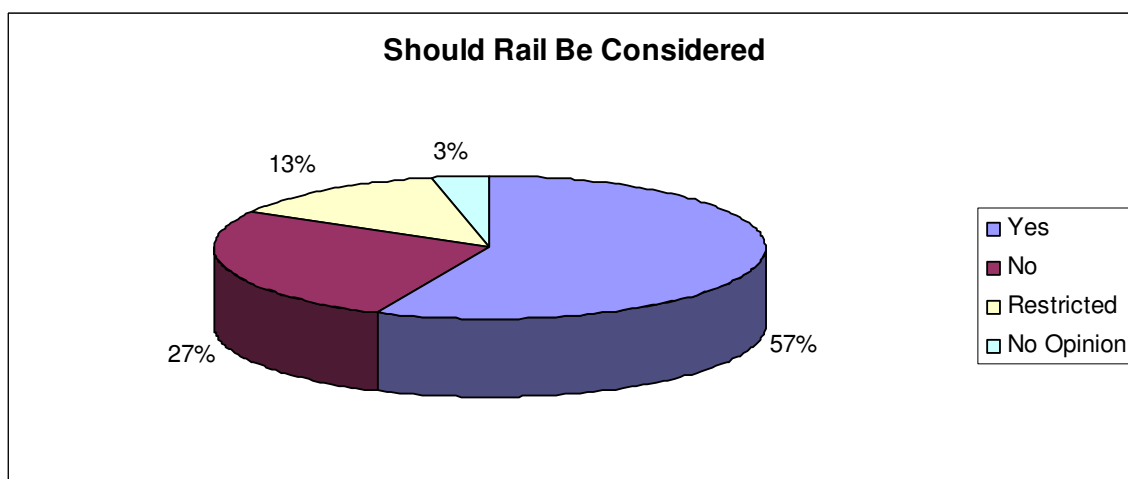
What would you say is the level of awareness in your community about the economic role of your local aviation facility?



Q5 Role of High Speed Rail

What role, if any, should high-speed passenger rail play in planning for long-term aviation facility expansion?

The majority of the people interviewed believed that high-speed passenger rail should be considered in long-term planning for aviation facility expansion. Several people, however, expressed concern that either the investment would be too high or it would not be a factor in planning so it should not be considered. There were also a significant number of people who said it would only make sense to consider it in certain, specific corridors such as those with large, dense populations.



Q6 Additional Thoughts about LATS

Interview participants were asked to share their thoughts with the WSDOT on LATS and the process. Their comments are included here

Communication

- Educate the public about the study while it is being conducted.

- Give a briefing to the legislature explaining what is being learned.
- Before we get too far down the road we need to ask the users of the airports if they will use the facilities that we identify to expand.
- It would help the aviation community to know how the airport taxes come back into and help the community. In general, taxes don't get quantified and the benefits to communities do not get communicated.
- The study needs more public input and it needs it early on. Without it the study will not have credibility.
- WSDOT needs to do more outreach and make presentations to organizations like the APA (American Planning Association).
- WSDOT needs to share the study as it is developing with local governments.
- Be sure to include air cargo users.

Challenges

- What we have is not meeting the needs of the system, especially freight.
- The ongoing debate in Snohomish County will feed into the study. Try to align and integrate the study methodology with the debate.
- We are going to have to find creative ways to fund airports in the long-term.
- Beware of redundancy. Too much redundancy wastes scarce dollars. You don't need to duplicate everything at every airport in a region. You want to meet the needs with services available at the airports but not each and every one.
- Safety is the most important thing. Make the right choices. It is about more than just general aviation. We need to consider medical and emergency evacuation.
- We need all-weather airports even for small aircraft.
- Airports need to be close by.
- Air service is very controversial. Controversy is the number one challenge.

LATS Study Advice

- The study should have a section on the importance of having facilities for emergencies. This needs to be given some weight in the analysis.
- There needs to be a coalition of people who have a stake in small, local airports that can help move money and influence decisions.
- It is in the interest of the state to maintain a role because it will help relieve congestion and have an impact on the rest of the transportation system.

- Boeing Field needs to be given more consideration in transportation studies because it is the 2nd busiest airport in the northwest and 28th largest cargo in land and weight.
- Decisions about how the airports are prioritized should be done by consensus. Airports should be included in the process.
- For Phase II it is going to be very important that we have a good objective, be inclusive and stay in touch.
- Don't forget about the GA community. Users of GA airports are increasing. GA users will still want and need to land somewhere. Don't want to see GA users landing at the commercial airports. That includes both individual and corporate users.

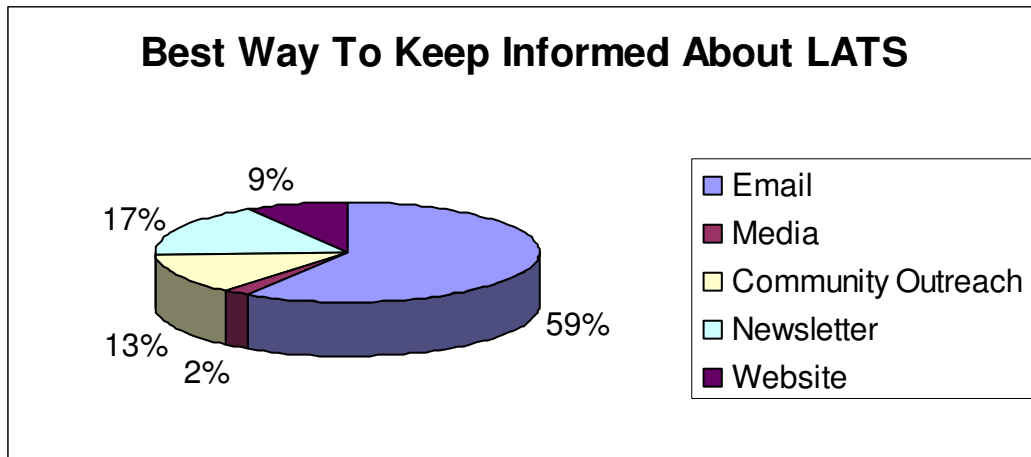
Goals

- Look more in depth at airports that are not providing commercial service.
- Look at the system from a "30,000 ft." perspective.
- Make sure the study is extremely comprehensive and includes even the most rural parts of the state.
- Maintain a statewide focus. Let the local people decide their future.
- We need to decide what the state's role is in maintaining basic aviation infrastructure. The goal is to serve communities – part state, part local, part users, and part business.
- Be proactive. Look at the future of aviation. It will most likely look very different from what we have now and we need to be ready with the right infrastructure.
- Make sure that we can continue to expand the aviation system.
- Be very cautious about letting local political pressure come into play during this process.

Q7 The Best Way to Communicate About LATS

How can we best keep you informed about the Long-term Air Transportation Study as it progresses?

The majority of respondents said email is the best way to keep them informed about the LATS. The LATS Newsletter and outreach efforts were the next most popular methods for communication. Several respondents suggested briefings to the legislature and other interested groups such as PSRC.



Commercial Airline Stakeholder Interviews

Phone interviews were conducted with four commercial airline users: Southwest Airlines, Federal Express, Horizon Airlines and Empire Airlines (a FedEx feeder airline). None of the four people interviewed knew about LATS but all four agreed that they would like to be added to the listserve and be kept up to date. All four also agreed that the general public's level of awareness about the important role airport facilities play in the community is very low. Three of the four interviewed felt that passenger rail could have an important role in future airport expansion.

The challenges facing Washington's aviation system were expressed in the following comments:

"Cost control and the cost of landing at SeaTac."

"The freight side is very limited. Future ramp space and accessibility are issues" for freight carriers.

"There is no more room to expand gates or ramp space at SeaTac or Boeing Field. Spokane has ramp space for air cargo and is encouraging FedEx to expand there."

"There is no way they can expand at SeaTac or Boeing Field so they just use bigger planes."

"Parking aircraft overnight" is a problem. "There are not enough overnight parking spaces at SeaTac."

"Escalating airport user costs."

"There is a need to develop and support additional GPS facilities."

One user mentioned that "They don't see anywhere in the state that they would consider expanding to. Portland airport helps them service southwest Washington, Vancouver, B.C. helps with northwest Washington, SeaTac serves central Puget Sound and Spokane serves eastern Washington and northern Idaho. If they wanted to expand they would probably consider Spokane."